NOTHING WAS TOO GOOD FOR HIM

BY HOWARD FIELDING

Melnor is a patriot. The champagne that he has drunk to the health of Uncle Sam and the confusion of all Spaniards would float a small gunboat. He seized Bill by the hand, pulled him into the private office and two minutes later had insisted upon taking the search for Tom Grady entirely into his own hands.

While the investigation was making two young gentlemen named Stratton and Reeves called upon Melnor and were duly presented to Bill, whereupon Messrs. Stratton and Reeves swore in the name of all the gods at once that they were proud to take the hand of Gunner's Mate Doyle of the Raleigh.

It was not a soft hand, by the way, but it was a clean one, and Doyle from top to toe—or keel to truck, if you prefer the phrase—was a neat, natty young sailorman.

"Mr. Doyle's going to dinner with us tonight," said Melnor. "Allen's been called away. There's a vacant chair."

"Out of sight!" exclaimed Stratton and Reeves.

Doyle turned very red. In his heart he wanted to go. He had taken a sailor's strong and sudden liking for Melnor, and he knew that in his company he should see great things. Yet he was afraid—a queer word to use in connection with Bill Doyle.

"I better not," he said. "I've got no place in your party. I'd be a 1 pounder shell in the 6 inch gun. I wouldn't fit."

"Any one of Dewey's men," said Melnor, with vast impressiveness, "is big enough to fit any place that will hold him."

"If I could see Tom Grady first," said Doyle, hesitating.

"Won't tomorrow do?" asked Melnor.

"Well, I don't know," said Doyle, and he rubbed his head thoughtfully.

He could not tell these men why he was so anxious to see Tom Grady. It

HE SEIZED BILL BY THE HAND.

was, in fact, a matter of money. Doyle wanted to borrow $15, the balance of $20 that would be required to secure a private room in a hospital for his widowed sister's little boy. The youngster had a bad cut from broken glass, and it was not healing. The doctor had said that a week in the hospital would be worth a month at home, but the little fellow had seen a "ward" once and was afraid of it. A private room would cost $20.

Immediately after reaching New York Doyle had spent all his savings and all he could raise to get his sister out of a quagmire of debt. That is why he could raise but $5 toward the $20. In this emergency he had bethought him of his old friend Tom Grady, a thrifty fellow, who earned little, but saved much. Bill was particularly anxious to get the money on the next day, for the $20 room at the hospital might be taken any time, and the other good ones cost more.

The sailor could not mention such matters to these Wall street men. They might think that he wanted them to help him out. He made them understand, however, that finding Grady was very important.

Upon hearing this, Melnor called a trusted clerk.

"Jim," said he, "I want you to find Tom Grady, who used to work for a tailor in this building. I want the address by 10 o'clock tomorrow. Don't let anything stop you. You'll probably need some of Waller's sleuths"—Waller being the head of a private detective agency. "Here's some money to pay the freight."

He handed Jim a bit of paper that he had torn off a pad. Doyle saw $200 written on it in blue pencil.

Bill Doyle, gunner's mate from the Raleigh, strayed into the office of J. Bolton Melnor, broker, on Nassau street near Wall. The tar was looking for his friend Tom Grady, who had formerly worked in that place.

The building had been remodeled and improved to the extent that none of the old tenants could afford to live in it, but with a sailor's instinct for locality Bill had found the exact spot where Tom Grady once worked.

Bill saw that the channel buoys had been shifted, and he came in with only enough steam to give him steerage way. He would have put about hastily had not Melnor chanced to get an eye on him.

The idea of spending $200 to hunt a man for the purpose of borrowing $15 from him made the sailor feel a faintness in his solar plexus.

"It ain't right for me to let you do this," he began, but Melnor would not hear a word. He had a gently commanding way which fitted exactly to the sailor's trained obedience. From that moment Gunner's Mate Doyle was as completely under the sway of Melnor as if he had been the admiral.

Two electric cabs took the party up town, Doyle riding with Melnor to the building where he had his rooms. Reeves and Stratton were to be there at 7. The rooms appeared to Doyle as

SHE SET A CORNER OF THE ENVELOPE ALIGHT.

the most luxurious abode ever inhabited by any mortal creature. He was a young man of quick perceptions, and in a flash there came to him an education in the art of living. He became conscious of a new kind of envy.

Melnor's man made a large supply of champagne cocktail, a delicacy never before presented to the palate of Bill Doyle. He had the misfortune to like it exceedingly. The quantity which he swallowed under the pressure of Melnor's hospitality did not disturb his head, but it upset all his notions about drinking. He had never liked liquor, and beer had appealed to him merely as a good thing on a hot day, but he fancied that champagne cocktail might be acceptable at all times and seasons.

It will not be worth while to describe the dinner for eight. When Doyle learned that the other four were to be ladies connected with the theatrical profession, he had visions of wild revelry such as he had sometimes read about in the newspapers. As a matter of fact, the dinner was as decorous as it might have been anywhere that he could imagine.

Still there was plenty of fun. Everybody did or said something clever—everybody except Bill, whose native wit deserted him because he was all the time trying to be like the others. Yet they strove to make him think that he was very clever indeed, and sometimes, slightly assisted by the champagne, they nearly succeeded.

The pretty girl who would have smiled upon Allen smiled radiantly upon Bill, and by 9 o'clock his heart was like a redhot coal. Yet he told himself that he was having the time of his life and that it was great good fortune to be with such people and to get a peep into another and a brighter sphere.

He learned that Reeves was not a New Yorker, but a speculator from Chicago, who had recently made himself famous by losing a vast sum of money. Reeves did not seem to be worrying about his misfortune, and therefore Bill, who had ideas about fortitude, decided that he must be a truly great man.

These facts were communicated to Bill by Miss Maynard, the young woman who was making such havoc with his affections. She was continually enlightening him on matters pertaining to important people, all of whom seemed to be the intimate friends of Melnor and his guests. Bill judged that he must accidentally have fallen into one of the most distinguished companies in the metropolis.

He began to take a tremendous interest in wealth and luxury, subjects to which he had previously given only the vaguest consideration. If this girl had talked to him about the irrigation of the Great American desert, he would never have been able to see a grain of sand thereafter without emotion.

The dinner lasted till half past 9 o'clock, when the party went to a theater, arriving when the performance was more than half over, which seemed to Bill a singular extravagance even for these fortunate people. After the theater some one suggested that they should go and get something to eat. Bill was not accustomed to draw his rations quite so often, but he made no objection. He did not care where they went so long as he went with them.

This supper was even more delightful to Bill than the dinner. He was less conscious of his own awkwardness, and he had almost entirely accustomed himself to the idea that somebody else was paying for everything. This had strongly oppressed him at first, for Bill had always had a magnificent liberality; but, as he afterward expressed it, with $5 in his pocket in that crowd he "simply had to be a bum."

There was one incident of the supper which impressed Bill particularly. Mr. Reeves received a note, and the boy who brought it said he had been on the trail since 6 o'clock.

As Reeves took the envelope in his hand the eyes of the young woman beside him fell upon it. Bill saw her face suddenly flush.

"That's from Millie Leavitt!" she cried.

"You are mistaken, my friend," replied Reeves gently, and he made a movement as if to put the note into his pocket unopened.

The girl snatched it out of his hand and sprang up. Bill's common sense told him that this scene was half jest, yet he viewed it with awful attention as a revelation of the innermost parts of high life.

"It's from Millie, and I'm going to read it," exclaimed the girl, and she tore an end of the envelope.

"I beg you not to do so," said Reeves. "It is not from a woman."

The girl wavered. Evidently her sense of honor would not permit her to read the note, yet her jealousy demanded something.

"If I can't read it," she said, "neither shall you. I'll burn it."

"If you cannot take my word for it," said Reeves gently, "you may do what pleases you."

She seized a burning taper which had been put upon the table for the convenience of the gentlemen, who were smoking, and set a corner of the envelope alight. Reeves did not move a muscle.

Suddenly the girl clutched the burning paper in her hand, extinguishing the flame, and then she threw the envelope down in front of Reeves.

"Thank you," said he, and was again about to pocket the note when the girl, with tears in her eyes, whispered, "Please let me read it, Johnny."

He nodded, and she pounced upon the letter like a kitten. The next instant she screamed so loudly that the hero of Manila and all the others except Reeves sprang up in alarm.

The envelope contained five Bank of England notes of £100 each—charred on the edges—and this communication:

Dear John—Here are the proceeds of the sale of the last of your bonds—in English money, as you requested. If this doesn't pull you through, I'll be hanged if I see how you're going to get out at all. Yet come to me, old man, if anything goes wrong, and I will do my best. Faithfully yours,

DONALD PAYNE.

The girl read it aloud, and then she put her head in her arms on the table and shed copious tears—real ones too.

And Bill Doyle had a new idea of calmness and courage. Reeves, the stock gambler, had displaced all the naval heroes in history.

When the supper was over, the gunner's mate took his fair partner home in a cab. On the Broadway corner of the street where she lived stood a young man with roses which he had been offering for sale in the all night restaurants. Bill bought the stock for $3, despite the protests of his companion, who promised to keep them and did for almost two days.

She said good night to Bill very prettily at her door. He returned to the cab like one in a dream.

"I'm to take you anywhere you want to go," said the cabman.

"I'll walk," replied Bill, who had not the courage to give the location of the tenement where his sister lived.

He plodded slowly home, and every step gave him a singular sensation of walking down hill.

The next morning he called at Melnor's office, vaguely hoping that there would be another dinner party. Melnor was not there, but he left a note for Bill saying that he regretted having to inform him that Tom Grady was

SHE SAID GOOD NIGHT TO BILL.

dead. The note was very kind and polite, but it did not mention any more dinner parties.

So that was the end. Nothing in New York was too good for Bill, and this is what he had got:

In his brain a vision of wealth and luxury and a troublesome new idea of life.

In his stomach a craving for terrapin and champagne cocktails.

In his heart a hopeless and absurd passion for a girl who was not what he thought she was and would not have been a good mate for him even if she had been.

In his soul a new ideal of character and conduct founded upon an exhibition of foolishness by a born gambler.

These things had cost him $3, which had nominally purchased roses. He was just so much poorer in pocket, though something like a hundred had been spent upon him in the last few hours.

The only thing he had gained was the knowledge that Tom Grady was dead.

HE WENT UP HIGHER

"The question of sick and annual leave," said a clerk in an up town department to a reporter, "is here one of the utmostimportance to government clerks and is one of their precious privileges. I will tell you of an occurrence in my department which will interest fellow clerks especially.

"A clerk in my division put in an application for a few days' leave in the usual form in writing, to be O. K.'d by the chief of divison and sent on its way to the chief clerk of the department. Not hearing from it and the time approaching for his departure he went to his chief and said:

" 'Mr. ——, how about my application?'

" 'Here it is on my desk. I have not sent it up. It is too early in the year to apply for that length of time, important business or not. You cannot be spared.'

"My friend, who is a little fellow and a diplomat, grasped the situation at once. It happened that he had a personal acquaintance with the secretary, one of those rare instances where a cabinet officer has a personal acquaintance with one of his own clerks. They had met outside of the department, for the little fellow is a member of an influential family in the secretary's own district.

"He bowed and withdrew, but instead of going back to his desk he made a short cut up the corridors toward the secretary's room. Just as he was approaching the latter's private office entrance the secretary, in company with a couple of gentlemen, came out. Observing the clerk and his anxious, inquiring face, he paused, shook him cordially by the hand and exclaimed to his companions:

" 'Senator, here is a bright little fellow from my state who is the father of the biggest, cherubic faced baby you ever saw and the husband of the happiest of wife mothers. Look at him blush. Well, what's the matter now?'

" 'Why, I want to go away on business for a fortnight, and'—

" 'Well, you little rascal, why don't you go? I'll let you—only be sure to come back and don't get lost on the cars.'

"The secretary's hearty laugh, in which the others joined, echoed in the marble tessellated corridors, and they passed on. The 'royal word' had been given.

"That evening at quarter to 4—he left it until last minute purposely—he went to his chief. It was his turn to rub it in.

" 'Mr. —,' he said quietly, 'have you sent up my leave?'

" 'I have not,' replied the chief shortly. 'I disposed of that question this morning.'

" 'I thought that the secretary granted leave in this department. I was not aware that chiefs of division possessed that authority.' It was war now. Both looked each other unflinchingly in the eye. Then the chief began to smell a little official mouse and resorted to browbeating, as is not unusual under similar circumstances.

" 'You are impertinent'—

" 'I beg your pardon,' quickly interrupted the clerk, 'for a chief to say to a clerk that he is impertinent imputes a charge against him. I request that you withdraw that remark. It is no impertinence for a clerk to state a rule of the department to his chief, more especially when he appears to have forgotten it or is unaware of its existence. The secretary, and he alone, finally grants or disapproves applications for leave in all departments of the government. I have never before heard this authority questioned'—

" 'I don't question it,' hastily interjected the chief, to whose nose the official mousy smell was each moment becoming more acute.

" 'By not submitting my application to those whose province it is to decide such questions you certainly do question it and exceed your authority. Approved or disapproved by you, they and not you pass on it finally, and, furthermore, you know it.'

" 'I will send it up tomorrow,' said the chief as he climbed down from his high horse as gracefully as the occasion admitted. 'Let me see, you said to go'—

" 'Take your time,' replied my friend pleasantly. 'It is already granted. I have the secretary's personal permission to go provided I do not get lost on the cars. I start tomorrow, and I will try not to get lost. Good by.' "—Washington Star.